



Scotland, Nuclear Energy Policy and Independence

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of nuclear energy in Scotland, and the concerns for Scotland as it votes for independence. The aim is to focus directly on current Scottish energy policy and its relationship to nuclear energy. The paper does not purport to advise on a vote for or against Scottish independence but aims to further the debate in an underexplored area of energy policy that will be of value whether Scotland secures independence or further devolution. There are four central parts to this paper: (1) consideration of the Scottish electricity mix; (2) an analysis of a statement about nuclear energy made by the Scottish energy minister; (3) examination of nuclear energy issues as presented in the Scottish Independence White Paper; and (4) the issue of nuclear waste is assessed.

A recurrent theme in the analysis is that whether one is for, against, or indifferent to new nuclear energy development, it highlights a major gap in Scotland's energy and environmental policy goals. Too often, the energy policy debate from the Scottish Government perspective has been reduced to a low-carbon energy development debate between nuclear energy and renewable energy. There is little reflection on how to reduce Scottish dependency on fossil fuels. For Scotland to aspire to being a low-carbon economy, to decarbonising its electricity market, and to being a leader within the climate change community, it needs to tackle the issue of how to stop the continuation of burning fossil fuels.

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